

FANRPAN

Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network

PRESS RELEASE

AFRICAN BIOTECHNOLOGIST RECEIVES YARA AWARD

Dr. Florence Wambugu, CEO of Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation International, received the 2008 YARA award for her contribution to the African green revolution in improving farmer income and production efficiency. The award and trophy were handed over by Ms Elizabeth Jacobsen, Royal Norwegian Ambassador to Kenya. The event, held on 23 September, formed part of the gala banquet at the First All-Africa Biotechnology Congress that was attended by some 400 participants from 39 countries, held on 22-26 September 2008, in Nairobi, Kenya.

The YARA award, initiated in 2005 and sponsored by YARA International of Norway, is granted to Africans who make significant contributions to improving food security, raising farmer income and alleviating poverty and malnutrition.

The mission of Africa Harvest, established in 2002, is to work towards an Africa that is free from hunger, poverty and malnutrition. The organization is registered in New York, USA, as a non-profit organization and has offices in Kenya, South Africa and USA.

The Ambassador highlighted the achievements of Dr. Wambugu: "There were 32 nominations for the award and the panel decided that Dr Wambugu was the best suited candidate. She had worked tirelessly over 10 years with smallholder farmers and established strong relationships with communities in adopting healthy banana plants raised through tissue culture techniques, contributed to food security in the light of climate change, and promoted biotechnology innovation at local and regional level".

Tissue culture banana plants that are virtually virus-free not only produce quicker than conventional plants but also significantly raise yields and net income. Farmers received ongoing guidance in managing their banana orchards by way of extension services through over 100 community working groups. Dr. Wambugu also initiated a tree project that led to planting of some 25 000 trees, while being an active participant in the African Bio-fortified Sorghum project that uses genetic modification to raise the quantity and quality of protein in the grain, as well as enhancing mineral and vitamin content. This enriched sorghum, still in the experimental stage, endeavours to counteract malnutrition caused by staple foods with poor nutritional value.

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By: Dr. Wynand J. van der Walt, FoodNCropBio

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established in 1997. FANRPAN was formed by the governments, researchers, policy analysts and farmers, private sector of 13 Southern African countries, along with other stakeholders, to develop such knowledge by strengthening the region's capacity for policy analysis and by fostering stakeholder participation in policymaking processes. FANRPAN currently has activities in 13 Southern African countries namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Since its inception in 1997, FANRPAN has established itself as a reliable source of research-backed policy advice and an inclusive platform for policy dialogue.

VISION: A food secure southern Africa free from hunger and poverty.

MISSION To promote effective food, agriculture and natural resources policies by

- supporting demand-driven **policy research**,
- amplifying the **voices** of farmers and civil society groups in policy debates and facilitating linkages between government and civil society, and
- **building capacity** for policy analysis and policy dialogue in southern Africa.

Prime objective of the Regional Approach to Biosafety for Southern African Countries (RABSAC) study is to identify issues like barriers to movement of technology, potential barriers to trade in GM commodities and implications for regional food security.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of FANRPAN

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